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## PRESS-REGISTER

### Railroad quiet zone approved

City takes action to make nights more restful for downtown hotel guests

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Staff Reporter

Downtown hotel guests might soon be able to rest easy.

The Mobile City Council on Wednesday approved contracts for roadwork to create a quiet zone for trains along the downtown riverfront.

The city will close St. Anthony and Adams streets, where they cross the railroad tracks and upgrade road-rail crossings at Dauphin, Government, Monroe and Eslava streets.

Once the work is done, trains passing through downtown Mobile will refrain from blowing their horns from north of the GM&O Building to south of the Alabama Cruise Terminal.

The city sought the quiet zone after a request from the Retirement Systems of Alabama, which owns the Battle House Renaissance Hotel and Riverview Renaissance Hotel, both on Royal Street, in downtown Mobile.

The hotels, which are both part of the Marriott chain, ranked at the bottom of a recent companywide survey of guests about how restful their sleep was.

Federal regulations require trains to blow their whistles four times before every intersection at a volume of 110 decibels — about the same as a rock concert.

Local governments are allowed to hit the mute button, but only if they install other safety measures at the junctions, such as crossing gates.

The city will pay CSX Transportation, which owns the railroad, about \$120,000 to do some of the track work. City workers will do the rest.

City Attorney Larry Wettermark said he did not know how much the city's portion of the project would cost.

After the work is done, the city will do sound checks that may require the quiet zone to be extended farther south, Wettermark said.

In July, the city included \$800,000 in a bond issue to implement the quiet zone.

Some of the intersections will be easier to tackle than others.

Adams Street has been closed behind a locked gate for years, Wettermark said, so the city will just render that permanent.

But the city will use removable barriers to close St. Anthony Street, because the Alabama State Port Authority would need to reopen the road if an emergency evacuation was called, Wettermark said.

At Dauphin and Eslava streets, the city will need to pay about \$50,000 apiece for CSX to install new sensors to operate the gates at the rail intersections.

Those sensors will be able to calculate how far away the train is and how fast it's going, Wettermark said.

Sensors at those intersections now only check for location.

The intersections at Government and Monroe streets already have the new sensors, so the city will only need to put up extra signage, Wettermark said.

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